

his woodcarving. The quality of the relationship is expressed by Stella when she comments to Glen upon the "symptoms of possessiveness" (p. 160) inherent in everyone. People create images of themselves in others and this creation contains elements of destruction. Hence Jake attempts to rationalize his misery in the carving of Samson, and when the torment takes on a quality of apartness from himself he smashes the carving for firewood. Delilah betrayed Samson in order to reinforce his dependence on her. The love of God is of a different order. Likewise there is the confidence which Jake gives to the stunted, crippled Amos. However, when Jake becomes blind he kills himself rather than accept dependence on the cripple. There appears to be one exception to this pattern, the relationship between Miriam and Glen, but then their relationship has hardly begun and their reconciliation in the silence of the woods is ominously disturbed by a "single gunshot" which causes Miriam to shudder.

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NOTES

¹L. E. Braithwaite, *Bim* (St. Michael, Barbados), 8 No. 35.

²G. R. Coulthard, *The Commonwealth Pen* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 212.

³Roger Mais (1905-1955), was strenuously committed to his society and was sent to prison by the British Government during the Second World War for an article entitled "Now We Know" which was considered subversive.

⁴The three novels are: *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, (London: Cape, 1953); *Brother Man*, (London: Cape, 1954), and *Black Lightning*, (London: Cape, 1955).

The Case of Henri Troyat

The figure of Henri Troyat provides an instructive example of the incompatibility, almost certainly irreconcilable, between his reception by critics and general readers respectively. The average critic, whether literary or academic, is usually content to neglect Troyat's work completely, or to pass it over casually as the over-facile product of an outdated naturalism, without interest. The reader in the street—or more likely in the commuter train—devours Troyat's novels insatiably. He has written no less than five *romans-fleuve* in the last quarter-century, and his sales have been enormous. This, of course, is a typical best seller situation, but in Troyat's case there are additional elements which we cannot neglect. His literary career has throughout been marked by recognition, from the Prix Populiste awarded to his first novel *Faux-jour* (1934) and the 1938 Prix Goncourt for *L'Araigne*, to election to the Académie Française while still in his forties in 1959. Whatever one may think of this latter institution, or of literary prizes, this can be no

mere lower middlebrow. Much more important, however, is his peculiar position as an *émigré* writing in a second language (Troyat, whose real name is Lev Tarassov, was born in Moscow in 1911; his family fled Russia and settled in France in 1920). Alongside his fictional work he has become perhaps the principal interpreter of classical Russian literature in France today; works on Pushkin and Lermontov have been followed by monumental studies on Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and most recently Gogol. Like his novels, these works have been widely diffused in translation, and it is clearly impossible to dismiss their author as a pure lightweight.

That Troyat stands square in the naturalist tradition is also disputable, (although when we strip off the accumulated layers of vagueness and misunderstanding surrounding this concept, we are likely to find little more than the unique genius of Zola; it is perhaps the critical concept of naturalism which is outdated, not the tradition). But in effect Troyat is a realist, and this wider tradition has every claim, since Balzac and Flaubert, to be regarded as a, if not the, classical tradition of the French novel. In Troyat's case the influence of Zola is reinforced by that of Balzac (though not Flaubert), but even more by that of the great Russians, seen too essentially as realists since the dimension of moral perplexity and torment is considerably muted in Troyat. What are perhaps his finest novels are indeed mainly set in Russia, the trilogy *Tant que la terre durera* covering the vicissitudes of a bourgeois family in the thirty years up to the Revolution, and the five volumes of the Decembrist novel, *La Lumière des justes*. These are historical novels of the purest kind, but behind the carefully prepared dramatic incidents and sheer delight in historical evocation, we cannot fail to detect a constant intention to comprehend the ideas and attitudes behind events, the "why" as well as the "how" of history. To comprehend, rather than to judge, though this too becomes implicit when Troyat is dealing with the circumstances which led, say, to his own family's exile. Yet Troyat has not limited himself to historical reconstructions of Czarist Russia, but has equally succeeded in recreating the Corrèze of 1912 in *Les Semailles et les moissons* (1953), or a present-day Parisian family in *Les Eygletière* (1965). Moreover he has written in addition to his *romans-fleuve* five volumes of stories and some ten individual novels. Of these the best known is *La Neige en deuil* (1952), the sensitive story of a search for a crashed plane in the mountains, which becomes a moral parable. All this reveals Troyat's desire to deploy his talents through a broad spectrum of fictional categories; at the same time his technique remains resolutely traditional. His narratives begin at the beginning and proceed evenly until they end, while the historical novels are beautifully written in French of classical elegance and sobriety matched by few contemporary writers. He is perfectly capable of technical virtuosity, and in *Les Eygletière*—as indeed in his earlier prewar novels—writes in a vigorous idiom, with a keen ear for living dialogue.

Troyat's last novel series, *Les Héritiers de l'avenir* (1968-70), is nevertheless his weakest. This account of the life of a former serf and his master, later a revolutionary terrorist, from the years immediately preceding the emancipation of 1861 to lonely and pointless exile in France a half-century later, contains too much repetition of situation, character, and setting from the earlier "Russian" sequences. (This may be why it ran only to three volumes instead of Troyat's more normal five.) With his latest novel, *La Pierre, la feuille et les ciseaux* (1972) he returns to a contemporary subject, in what we may assume is a single volume: nothing would indeed prevent a sequel, but the volume's unity is complete as it stands. The title refers to the ancient game of stone, paper, and scissors (still played by Chinese children) in which the players hide

one hand behind their back, then simultaneously bring it out in a symbolic gesture, first clenched to represent stone, palm upwards to represent paper, or the index and middle finger extended like scissor blades. Stone "wins" over scissors as it blunts them, scissors over paper, since they cut it, but paper over stone, since it can wrap it up.

André, an artist and interior decorator, is a mainly inactive homosexual in his thirties, drifting through life with little heed to his professional career; indeed, he does little work and is perfectly happy buying clothes or playing scrabble with his platonic friend Sabine, a young woman equally without fixed occupation. The basic situation is therefore a vague equilibrium when the third protagonist appears, Frédéric, soon rebaptized Aurelio, a darkly handsome hitchhiker who forces his way into André's life and affections. Aurelio is the stone, enveloped by André, the paper, but himself dominating Sabine, the scissors, with whom he launches into a passionate affair. The main action of the novel circles round the shifting fortunes of three conflicting egoisms in this up-to-date version of the eternal triangle. Eventually Sabine becomes pregnant and decides to bear her child, who is looked after mainly by André. Aurelio goes off to America with a conveniently-encountered homosexual millionaire. Sabine follows him although they soon separate, and André is left literally holding the baby. The end of the novel shows him taking the baby so that his sister in the suburbs may care for it, as she already has done with a series of stray animals he had absentmindedly acquired in the past.

The name which leaps to every critic's pen on reading the novel is of course Françoise Sagan. We have the same setting of a glamorized world of artists, millionaires, and expensive restaurants, the same combination of *vie de Bohème*, the psychological novel, and the *roman mondain* which has even attracted the austere Simone de Beauvoir in recent work. This is new territory for Troyat and he handles it well, with such telling details as Sabine and Aurelio eating pork chops spread with strawberry jam, standing up in André's kitchen. Yet at the same time we discern what has always been a weakness of the psychological novel, that the protagonists live and act in a vacuum instead of being firmly anchored in their environment, as are indeed the characters in Troyat's other fiction. Life is a little too easy, and we may feel that André, whatever his talent, which is in any case only asserted and not demonstrated, is implausibly fortunate in being able to survive in Paris at all. Likewise, Aurelio, though determined and ambitious, falls too easily on his feet. Despite the realistic dialogue, the essence of the novel belongs to a contemporary myth rather than observed reality. Its best sections are probably the sympathetic portrayal of André with his largely feminine temperament (we should remember that Troyat has created what are, for a male novelist, some of the most convincing female characters in modern fiction). Aurelio, on the other hand, we have to take on trust; he belongs more to romance than to reality.

What then, has Troyat achieved in this latest novel? In the portrayal of the French equivalent of the swinging world of the color supplements, a dazzling virtuoso performance, with a lively turn of style, often elliptical and scarcely a detail wasted; in its chosen field, as good as anything, since the comparison has to be made, done by Françoise Sagan. As good as, but not

better; and we are entitled to think that the theme and treatment fall considerably short of the solidity which forms the undeniable merit of his best work.

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On the Theme of Paternal Love in the Novels of R. K. Narayan

Paternal love is a significant theme in R. K. Narayan's fiction. From his earliest stories, for example "Forty-five a Month"¹ in which the usually servile Venkat Rao decides to defy his irascible boss in order to spend his evenings with his child, fatherhood is highlighted as one of the most beautiful experiences in life. Two novels that explore this theme in depth are *The Financial Expert*² and *The Sweet-Vendor*.³

The parallels between Margayya the financial expert and Jagan the sweet-vendor are numerous, but the differences are more significant. Whereas Margayya remains the same despite various experiences, Jagan finds himself both as man and as father. Critics have opined that Margayya reaches a higher plane by the end of the novel. Rajeev Taranath says, "At the end of the novel, he is apparently back at the position he started from; but with an altered and enriched kind of awareness. In other words, he has ceased to be anonymous to himself."⁴ I feel this reflects the sensitivity of the critic more than any pattern present in the novel. Margayya undergoes no change. Affluence does not go to his head; nor does it rid him of his miserliness. He learns nothing from Balu's flight, supposed death, and return. He is a little more generous about Balu's allowance, but these experiences do not teach him anything about values or human relationships or suffering. Even the birth of his grandson, the one unflinching soft spot in dynasty-loving egoists, does not move him. At this point he has lost all paternal love. I do not see his attack on Dr. Pal the way Panduranga Rao does; Rao says, "He punishes Pal and thunderously exhibits his resentment against lewd life. But the beating he administers to Pal is something more; it is a revolt against a world that ever keeps him unhappy."⁵ I disagree because I do not see any evidence that Margayya is unhappy or caught "between the two civilizations of modern India."⁶ Margayya is blissfully happy in his profession right from his banyan tree days to his financial wizardship. He is a very practical businessman as his deft manipulations show, especially the astuteness with which he divests himself, with a huge profit to boot, of the notoriety of being known as the publisher of *Domestic Harmony*. He does not sell his partnership out of any sudden moral awakening but because he had three very practical reasons—he detested running a modern office, sales were falling off, and it hurt his dignity to be associated with such a book.

As for his revolt against Pal's moral turpitude, let us not forget that Margayya's conscience has never been troubled by Pal's questionable ethics at any time though he has been cognizant of this from their very first meeting